

STATE:	Pennsylvania
COUNTY:	Philadelphia
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON:
American Philosophical Society Hall

AND/OR HISTORIC:
AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY HALL

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Independence Square

CITY OR TOWN:
Philadelphia

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
003

STATE:
Pennsylvania

CODE
42

COUNTY:
Philadelphia

CODE
101

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
American Philosophical Society, Dr. George W. Corner, Executive Officer

STREET AND NUMBER:
American Philosophical Society Hall

CITY OR TOWN:
Philadelphia

STATE:
Pennsylvania

CODE
42

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Dept. of Records

STREET AND NUMBER:
City Hall

CITY OR TOWN:
Philadelphia

STATE:
Pennsylvania

CODE
42

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Building Survey (6 photos)

DATE OF SURVEY:
☒ Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress/Annex

STREET AND NUMBER:
Division of Prints and Photos

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE:
D.C.

CODE
11

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The construction of the American Philosophical Hall as a permanent home for the Society was first conceived in 1769, but was not implemented until 1785, when the Pennsylvania Assembly awarded the present lot on Independence Square "for the purpose of erecting thereon a Hall, Library, and such other buildings or apartments as the said Society may think necessary for their proper accomodation." ¹This rectangular lot, facing on South Fifth Street, just behind Independence Hall, measures 70' on its Eastern and Western bounds, and 50' on the Northern and Southern.

The digging of the cellar was begun in 1785, but the building slowed with the lag in subscription funds. Finally, with considerable aid from Benjamin Franklin, the Hall was completed, and housed its first meeting in 1789. The plans and drafting for the Hall were drawn up by a Society committee. No plans remain, but much of the credit for the committee's work has been directed to the energetic Samuel Vaughan, the piloting member.

The two-and-a-half story rectangular brick building was built in the Late Georgian manner. It has a raised basement, a hip roof with two gabled dormers facing on both the east and west. The central doorways on the eastern and western facades consist of two paneled pilasters supporting a round arch over a basket-weave fanlight. The windows have jack arches, and 12 lights over 12.

In 1890, to provide additional space, the original hip roof and its deck were replaced by a flatroofed brick third story. This was removed in 1946, to restore the Hall to its historic appearance. The library is now housed directly across Fifth Street, in a replica of the Library Company building which formerly faced the Hall. The interior of the Hall has also been altered, most notably in the curved marble stairway at the Fifth Street entrance, which replaced a high and angular entranceway. ²The building has been fireproofed, and ceilings lowered as well. But many original features, fine paintings, and pieces of memorabilia, the flavor of the Hall, especially in the Lecture Room and Members Room on the second floor has been retained.

BOUNDARIES

Beginning at a point on the western side of Fifth Street, 96' south of Chestnut Street, extending along Fifth Street for 70' towards Walnut Street, then W for 50', then N 70', and then E 50' to the point of origin. These are the boundaries established by act of the Pennsylvania Assembly, March 28, 1785.

¹Provincial Assembly of Pennsylvania, "An Act for vesting in the American Philosophical Society held at Philadelphia for the promoting useful knowledge a certain lot of Ground being a part of the State House square," Section II, lines 14-16.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian☐ 16th Century☒ 18th Century☐ 20th Century☐ 15th Century☐ 17th Century☐ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1768, 1789

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal

☐ Education☐ Political☐ Urban Planning☐ Prehistoric☐ Engineering☒ Religion/Phi-☐ Other (Specify)☐ Historic☐ Industry

losophy

☐ Agriculture☒ Invention☒ Science☐ Architecture☐ Landscape☐ Sculpture☐ Art☐ Architecture☒ Social/Human-☐ Commerce☐ Literature

itarian

☐ Communications☐ Military☐ Theater☐ Conservation☐ Music☐ Transportation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The American Philosophical Society Hall, located on Fifth Street in Philadelphia's Independence Square, has housed, since its completion in 1789, one of America's oldest and most honorable learned and scientific societies, American Philosophical Society held at Philadelphia for Promoting Useful Knowledge. The Society traces origins back to 1743, when Benjamin Franklin publically urged the creation of a society to stimulate interest in learning. Several citizens responded to his call. In 1768, after a period of low interest, the Society merged with a similar rival group to form the organization which flourishes today. The newly-formed Philosophical Society, with Franklin as its first president entered early into the fields of pure and applied science where its most significant efforts have been recorded. The Society's journal, Transactions, first published in 1771, is today the oldest scholarly journal in America.

The two-story, Late Georgian brick building, designed by Samuel Vaughan, was altered by the addition of a third story in 1890, but has since been restored to its original height.

HISTORY

Benjamin Franklin, in his long and varied career, founded a number of societies and organizations, two of which loom large in the history of the American Philosophical Society. In 1743, Philadelphia's sage urged the creation of a society to stimulate interest in learning. Certain citizens then formed the Philosophical Society, and it is from this society that today's organization claims direct descent. But the new society did not flourish because its members neglected it, and it is not clear if they even met between 1744-1767. But in 1768 the activity of a group claiming descent from Franklin's Junto, founded in 1727, stirred the dormant Philosophical Society into life, especially as the rival group, now grandly called the American Society, held at Philadelphia for Promoting Useful Knowledge, consisted largely of people opposed to the proprietary clique in Pennsylvania. To meet the challenge, the Philosophical Society suddenly chose eighteen new members in 1768, mostly from the supporters of the proprietors, the Penn family.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brooke Hindle, The Pursuit of Science in Revolutionary America, 1735-1789 (Chapel Hill, N.C. 1956).

Brooke Hindle, The Rise of the American Philosophical Society, 1766-1787 (unpublished dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1949).

William E. Lingleback, "Philosophical Hall: The Home of the American Philosophical Society", an article in Transactions, American Philosophical Society, vol. 43, pt. 1.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES			
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		UTM	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	
NW	0	'	"		18.4872	00.4421	870	
NE	0	'	"					
SE	0	'	"					
SW	0	'	"					

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **less than one acre**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Richard E. Greenwood, Survey Historian	
ORGANIZATION Historic Sites Survey, Landmark Review	DATE 11/13/74
STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L. Street, N.W.	
CITY OR TOWN: Washington	STATE D.C.
	CODE 11

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)
Name _____

Title _____

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)
Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
Date **Jan 12, 1965**
ATTEST:
Date **9-18-75**
Keeper of the National Register
Date **9/20/75**
Director, OAHPS

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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²William E. Lingelback, "Philosophical Hall: The Home of the American Philosophical Society: in Transactions vol. 43, pt. 1 p.59.

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(Number all entries) 8. Significance second page

Apparently, the two societies faced a future of learned and political competition, but wiser council prevailed. Instead, the two groups merged on December, 20, 1768, forming the organization that exists today. Fittingly enough, the founder of the now defunct groups, Franklin, became president of the new society.

The newly formed American Philosophical Society had high ambition. Significantly, the society desired to become a truly American society, more than just a Philadelphia or Pennsylvania organization. New members came largely from outside of Philadelphia during the remainder of the colonial period. Moreover, the society elected corresponding members in Europe. These members contributed little to the society's work, but they heightened its reputation and sent books and other gifts to the society. In 1834, the 301 members were geographically distributed in this manner: 110 members living within ten miles of the Hall, 98 more in the United States, and 98 foreign countries. Today domestic membership is limited to roughly 500 and foreign to roughly 75.

The first larger undertaking by the society was the sponsoring of observations of the transit of Venus, an infrequent occurrence which could provide data for computing the distance of the earth from the sun. The Provincial Assembly of Pennsylvania granted £100 sterling toward the purchase of a telescope and a micrometer, and gave permission to erect an observation platform in the State House yard. Other observations were made at David Rittenhouse's observatory in Norriton, and at Cape Henlopen. The compiled information was transmitted to the Astronomer Royal in England and then published in the society's first opus, Transactions, vol. 1, in 1771. The society's findings were received with "great eclat" in Europe, where they were astonished at the accuracy of the report.¹

The greater part of the society's business has been transacted in the fortnightly meetings which have been held regularly since 1769, except during the British occupation of Philadelphia. At these meetings "communications" are presented by person or letter. In the early days these communications dealt with all manner of topics in pure and applied science. The hall also served as a museum of natural and archeological artifacts, and as a kind of patent office for the exhibition and description of inventions such as John Fitch's steamboat and Franklin's and Rittenhouse's electrical apparatus. The society's library has also been the recipient of many documents that reflect the widespread interests of its members. The Lewis and Clark Expedition records are preserved there at the request of Thomas Jefferson, who served concurrently as President of the United States and as President of the American Philosophical Society. The Mason and Dixon records are filed there as well, as is the most complete collection of Frankliniana. Today the library is specialized toward the history of science and culture in America and North American Indian

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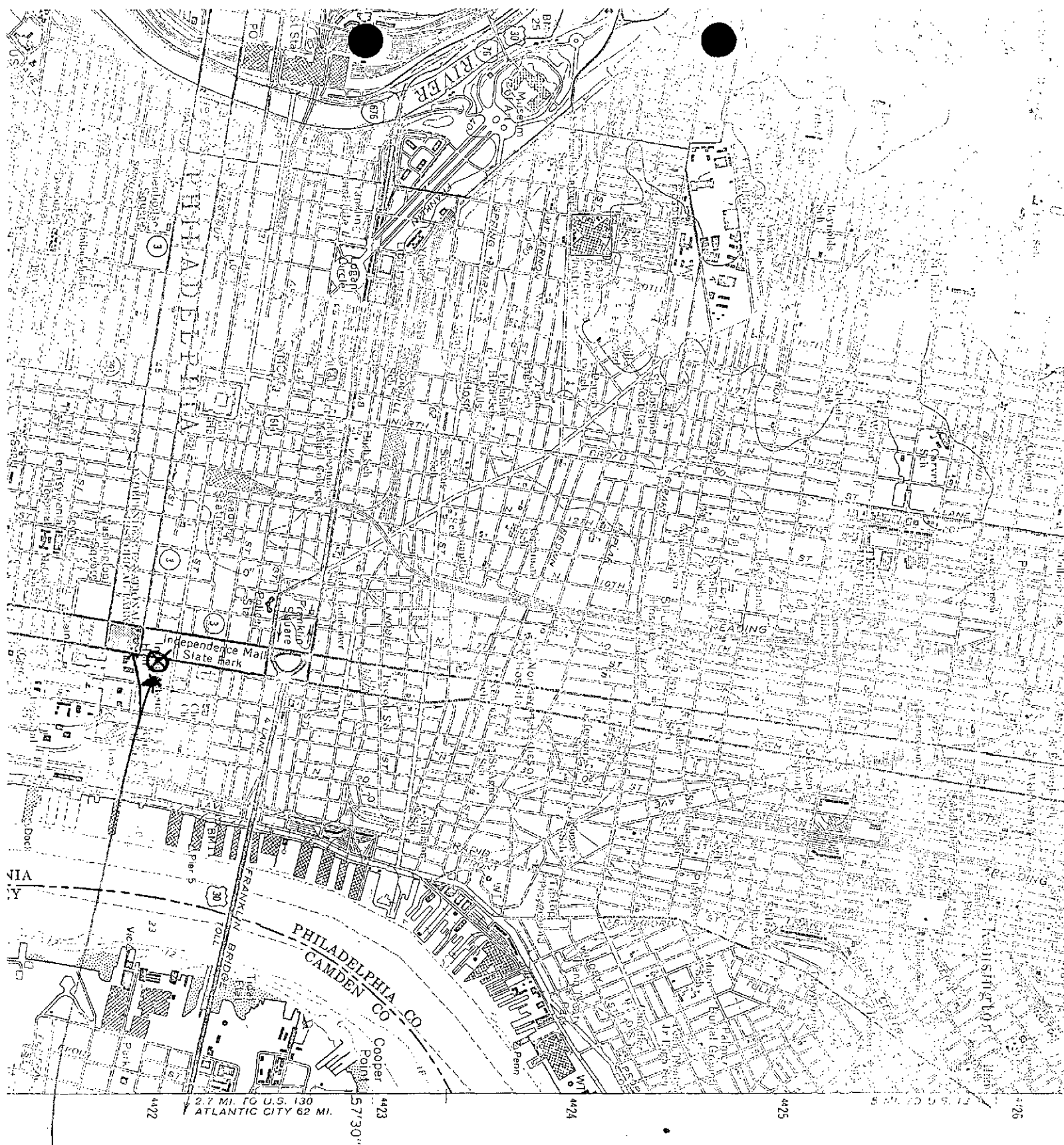
linguistics and archeology.

In the words of a member and chronicler of the American Philosophical Society:

The history of the American Philosophical Society is so closely interwoven with the educational, scientific, and political history of this nation that it is impossible in a brief review, even to touch upon the contributions of the Society and its members to the many developments in all these fields. Suffice it to say it has played an important part in all of them,...²

¹Edwin G. Conklin, "A Brief History of the American Philosophical Society", p.43.

²Ibid, p. 50.



AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY (104 S. 5th)

— PHILADELPHIA QUADRANGLE —

American Philosophical Society Hall UTM
Philadelphia Quad. Pa.N.J. USGS7.5'
18.487200.4421870

